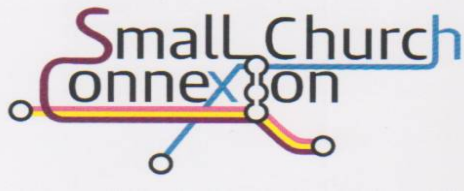
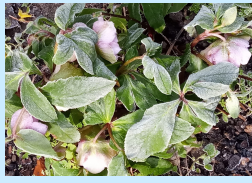


SMALL CHURCHES NEWSLETTER Winter 2025

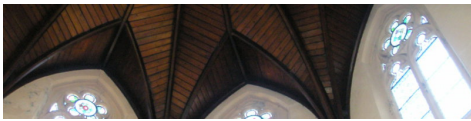


Welcome to the Winter edition of our newsletter, and may God bless you in this new year of 2025.

The hellebore (Christmas rose) pictured above was photographed on a frosty morning early in January bending away from the very cold air. But it will stand up strong when milder weather returns - hopefully by the time you read this. Some of our small churches are wanting to curl up, but we pray that all will be encouraged by the stories that follow and will be strengthened with reminders of what God can do even with the smallest.

If you have survived setbacks and are blossoming now, please share your news to encourage others.

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Honor Oak Baptist Church

(HOBC) situated in East Dulwich was designed for a congregation of 800 people in 1887. Although numbers have never reached that high, and today would have difficulty seating such a vast number, HOBC remains very much a place of worship for its congregation of not usually more than a dozen. HOBC most definitely qualifies as 'a small church in a very big building' but its steadfast and faithful congregation continue to praise and thank God for all who have worshipped; all who have come to faith; all who have served (remain serving), and all those who have prayed and still pray for Honor Oak Baptist Church today.

In 2023, the congregation sadly witnessed the decline in health of their church secretary, Barbara Kingsley. Barbara had been the secretary for 30+ years and a church member for 30 years before that. The last deacons' meeting was held at Barbara's bedside and whilst evident that the illness was taking hold of Barbara's life, the life of HOBC remained very much at the forefront of Barbara's mind until her passing in September 2023. One may wonder if the future of HOBC was at the top of Barbara's agenda for discussion when received into heaven!

In November 2023, HOBC received an application for their ministerial vacancy following a three-year absence of being without a pastor. In August 2024, HOBC was thrilled to welcome Rev. Elaine Youngman

as their new minister. Elaine's induction service took place on 29 September, led by Rev. Claire Nicholls with 90 people present. The service involved the participation of all three deacons - Jane Chopping, Tom Costello and John Parry.

Please be in prayer for Elaine and her husband, Richard, as they settle into life and ministry at HOBC.



Finally...one suspects that Barbara is surely rejoicing that HOBC has a new minister and that Jane Chopping eventually accepted the mantle as church secretary!
For more details about Honor Oak Baptist, please visit www.hobc.org.uk

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Autumn Event on Saturday 19th October 2024 "Growing Healthy Churches"

The theme of growing healthy churches was much appreciated by all who came to Bromley Common Baptist Church back in October. In fact, two of those who came were in leadership of a small church near Chelmsford, and hadn't realized that it was organised by the London Baptist SCC! They were very welcome and enjoyed the time spent with us.

There were three main sessions after worship to start, and another time of worship with Communion at the end. Fran Bellingham led the first session about marks of a healthy church. The feedback showed how much people appreciated the emphasis that size is not the determining factor in whether a church is healthy, nor can success be measured by numbers. Some exercises of a practical nature were enjoyed and found useful. Each session included time to get together in small groups and discuss the subject.

The second session on the praying church was led by Manoj Raithatha. He gave examples of answered prayer that challenged and inspired everyone, including very dramatic examples of the power of prayer from his own life. The comments afterwards showed that people felt encouraged for leadership teams to pray and not give up. With God all things are possible, and that includes miracles!

After a break for lunch provided by Fran and Richard, her husband, the third session was led Paul Collett bringing stories from the ground. Some of the stories were encouraging and some challenging. People appreciated the feedback on what had been working for the churches represented; and the reminder that we all have different strengths and weaknesses but that God is in the midst. They found it helpful to review their situations and helpful to move forward.

What next???

The SCC team are considering what subjects to explore at events in 2025. Suggestions received to date include ways to engage in our communities; how to use limited resources; practical leadership advice. Your comments will help, so please let us know your views.



A new united beginning for Hatch End and Pinner Baptist churches

On Saturday 26th October 2024 there was a service to merge Hatch End BC with Pinner BC, becoming one church on two sites. This was the result of eighteen months of regular prayer meetings and discussion since Hatch End BC with about 20 members had trustees looking to stand down without others ready to take on the challenge. However, no-one wanted to close the church or to stop worship continuing on the site. So the solution was to merge with the nearby larger church which was willing to move forward as one church across two sites.

Rev Winston Bygrave, regional minister, presided over the merger service which united these two churches. Representatives from each church told the story of how God had led them to this point. A truly joyous occasion which included the act of covenanting together.

A more detailed account can be read on the LBA website story section. Hatch End BC is no longer on the list of Baptist churches in London, but the building remains to serve the local community and as a place of worship, part of Pinner BC. They value your prayers.

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At Cricklewood Baptist Church we, like many other churches, have been busy with carol services and a Christingle service. Above all that, each year we do three other things at Christmas. Some of my highlights are...

Our former church building was sold to property developers in the late 1990's and was converted into 14 flats. We now have around three different families who live in this building connected to the church so it is great that we go in for a short carol service in our former church building. We are building friendships with those living there now and share the message of Christmas through Bible readings and carols etc.

The church has a long standing friendship with our local residents associations and the Cricklewood town team, so its also a real joy to be invited and asked to organise singing carols outside Cricklewood post office. This is in a really good location and we are joined by other Baptist and Anglican churches. Free hot chocolates were given out and Gospel tracts, and various people did Christmas Bible readings as well as lots of carols sung. This year we were privileged to have Chris Duffett who joined us to help us in outreach and to judge those who entered our Nativity costume competition.



For the last 7 years, except for one year due to COVID, we have had a big Christmas community dinner on Christmas Day. Lots of volunteers help with this from several churches and folks with no church connection. Its great to see the same people come each year and give up their Christmas to serve! We also have someone who is a professional singer come and entertain with Christmas songs (he has done this for several years), quizzes, games, and lots of Christmas food made possible by our community funding from the CO-OP supermarket. Around 70 folks gathered for our Christmas day service to hear the Gospel and have lunch. This year was particularly moving as a number of those attending have been



diagnosed with different illnesses and are not expected to see Christmas in 2025. To receive letters afterwards from some of those who attended was very touching and reminds us of some of the reasons we do this even though it is a lot of hard work.

I was particularly challenged to listen to one person who shared how suicide had troubled him greatly and what the Bible had to say on it.

A busy time of year for many in churches with lots of opportunities to share the hope of the Gospel of Jesus.

Stephen Maclean

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Baptism service at Crayford Baptist Church

We were thrilled to have a baptism service in November, with the church filled with family and friends as two of our younger church friends spoke of how God had worked



in their lives. It was a powerful testimony to the grace of God and a great encouragement to the whole church. Two people in the congregation that day have now asked to be baptised!



The service was conducted by Rev Martyn Travers who was inducted as part-time interim minister on 1st Sept., and was welcomed into membership with his wife Marg that same day. This marks a new beginning for Crayford BC and the church is excited about what God is going to do. The Bible verse chosen for 2025 reflects this:

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.

See, I am doing a new thing!"

Isaiah 43: 18-19

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The next SCC newsletter will be in April. Please let us know what is happening in your church. Also **we value your feedback**. Please contact me at

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